

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method of collecting information related to RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting a category of items using a user interface associated with an RFID reader;
- (b) after selecting the category, using the RFID reader to interrogate at least one RFID tag associated with an item of interest to obtain information associated with the item of interest, wherein the item of interest is not currently associated with the category selected in step (a); and
- (c) thereafter associating the information obtained in step (b) with the category selected in step (a); and
- (d) saving the categorized information obtained in step (c) in a database.

Claim 2 (Canceled).

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises selecting a category from among a list of categories displayed on the user interface.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) comprises selecting a category and designating the attributes of items in that category to define the category.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the category describes a location where an item was interrogated.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the category describes a class of items.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 1, wherein categories from which a user may select are uploaded from a data storage device and displayed on the user interface.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least two categories of items using a user interface associated with an RFID reader;
- (b) after selecting at least two categories, using the RFID reader to interrogate at least one RFID tag associated with an item of interest to obtain information associated with the item of interest, wherein the item of interest is not currently associated with the categories selected in step (a); and
- (c) thereafter using the RFID reader to automatically categorize ~~categorizing~~ the information obtained in step (b) with at least one of the categories selected in step (a), and wherein information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item may be obtained from the RFID tag itself; and
- (d) saving the categorized information obtained in step (c) in a database.

Claim 9 (Canceled).

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein the categories are mutually exclusive.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Claim 12 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein one category describes whether an item is present in a storage area.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 13 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 8, wherein the categories describe different types of items.

Claim 14 (Canceled).

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 8, further comprising accessing a database stored in memory of the RFID reader to retrieve wherein information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item based on the information obtained from the RFID tag may be obtained from a database stored in memory of the RFID reader.

Claim 16 (Original): The method of claim 15, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 17 (Original): The method of claim 16, wherein the removable data storage device is a flash memory card.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least one category of items using a user interface associated with an RFID reader;
- (b) after selecting the category, interrogating RFID tags associated with items using the RFID reader, at least one of which is within the category of items;
- (c) using the RFID reader, categorizing information related to at least one item(s) associated with the interrogated RFID tag(s) in at least one of the categories; and
- (d) ignoring any RFID-tagged-item that may not be categorized in any of the categories, wherein in step (d) the RFID reader determines which of the RFID-tagged-items may not be categorized in any of the categories.

Claim 19 (Original): The method of claim 18, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (e) saving the categorized information in a database.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 20 (Original): The method of claim 19, wherein at least one category describes items of a certain type.

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 19, wherein ~~information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item may be~~ the RFID reader determines whether to categorize or ignore each RFID-tagged item based on information obtained from the RFID tag itself.

Claim 22 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 19, wherein ~~information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item may be~~ the RFID reader determines whether to categorize or ignore each RFID-tagged item based on information obtained from a database stored in memory of the RFID reader.

Claim 23 (Original): The method of claim 22, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 24 (Original): The method of claim 23, wherein the removable data storage device is a flash memory card.

Claims 25-38 (Canceled).

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 39 (Previously Presented): A method of obtaining information related to items of interest associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) interrogating RFID tags, each associated with an item, to obtain information;
- (b) using the information obtained in the interrogation step (a) for performing a primary operation of determining whether the items are in a predetermined order within a physical storage area; and
- (c) simultaneously with the primary operation of determining whether the items are in a predetermined order within the storage area in step (b), using the information obtained by the interrogation in step (a) for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in the storage area and updating an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the storage area.

Claim 40 (Previously Presented): A method of obtaining information related to items of interest associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) interrogating RFID tags, each associated with an item;
- (b) using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a primary operation of searching for certain items on a predetermined search list; and
- (c) simultaneously with the primary operation of searching for the certain items in step (b), using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in a physical storage area and updating an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the physical storage area.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 41 (Currently Amended): A method of obtaining information related to items of interest associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) interrogating RFID tags, each associated with an item, to determine information related to the items;
- (b) using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a primary operation of checking items into or out of a physical storage area; and
- (c) simultaneously with the primary operation of checking items into ~~or out~~ out of a physical storage area in step (b), using the information obtained in step (a) for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in the physical storage area to update an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the physical storage area.

Claim 42 (Currently Amended): A method of reconciling an inventory list of items associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

- (a) using an RFID reader to interrogate at least one RFID tag associated with an item;
- (b) determining whether the item is represented on the inventory list as being absent, and ~~if so~~ when the item is represented as being absent:
 - ~~(e)~~ — (i) indicating to a user in real time that the inventory list incorrectly indicates that the item is absent; and
 - ~~(d)~~ — (ii) enabling the user to correct the inventory list in real time by confirming that the item is present using a user interface associated with the RFID reader.

Claim 43 (Original): The method of claim 42, wherein the user interface comprises a display.

Claim 44 (Original): The method of claim 43, wherein the display is a touch panel display.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 45 (Currently Amended): A method of reconciling an inventory list of items associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

(a) using an RFID reader to interrogate RFID tags each associated with an item;
(b) determining whether an item represented on the inventory list as being present is among the items whose RFID tags were interrogated, and ~~if not~~ when the item is not among the items whose RFID tags were interrogated;

~~(c)~~ (i) indicating to a user in real time that the inventory list incorrectly indicates that the item is present; and

~~(d)~~ (ii) enabling the user to correct the inventory list in real time by confirming that the item is absent using a user interface associated with the RFID reader.

Claim 46 (Original): The method of claim 45, wherein the user interface comprises a display.

Claim 47 (Original): The method of claim 46, wherein the user interface comprises a touch panel display.

Claim 48 (Previously Presented): A method of organizing collected data related to items associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

(a) using an RFID reader to interrogate RFID tags, each associated with an item, wherein the items are not currently located at desired locations in a physical storage area, and the items are not currently arranged or interrogated in an order associated with their desired locations in the physical storage area;

(b) organizing, with the RFID reader, information obtained from the RFID tags in an order in which the items are to be moved from their current locations to their desired locations in the physical storage area; and

(c) providing the organized information from step (b) to a user.

Claim 49 (Original): The method of claim 48, wherein step (c) comprises providing information to the user on a display of the RFID reader.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claims 50-74 (Canceled)

Claim 75 (Currently Amended): A method of collecting information related to RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting a category of items using a user interface associated with an RFID reader, wherein a category is a group of items that possess specified attributes and represents a portion of an entire group of items having associated RFID tags;
- (b) after selecting the category, using the RFID reader to interrogate at least one RFID tag associated with an item of interest to obtain information associated with the item of interest, wherein the item of interest is not currently associated with the category selected in step (a);
- (c) thereafter associating the information obtained in step (b) with the category selected in step (a); and
- (d) saving the categorized information obtained in step (c) in a database.

Claim 76 (Currently Amended): A method of using information related to RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting a category of items using a user interface associated with a computer, and designating one or more attributes of items in that category to define the category;
- (b) obtaining a list of at least one RFID-tagged item; and
- (c) automatically associating information related to the at least one item with the selected category using the designated attributes.

Claim 77 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 76, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (d) saving the categorized information in a database.

Claim 78 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein step (a) comprises selecting a category from among a list of categories displayed on the user interface.

Claim 79 (Canceled).

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 80 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein the category describes a location where an item was interrogated.

Claim 81 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein the category describes a class of items.

Claim 82 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 77, wherein categories from which a user may select are uploaded from a data storage device and displayed on the user interface.

Claim 83 (Currently Amended): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least two categories of items using a user interface associated with a computer;
- (b) obtaining a list of at least one RFID-tagged item; and
- (c) categorizing information related to the at least one item(s) associated with the interrogated RFID tag(s) in at least one of the categories, wherein the information is obtained by interrogating the RFID tag(s); and
- (d) simultaneously with the primary operation of categorizing information in step (c), using the information obtained by the interrogation for performing a background inventory operation of determining the presence or absence of the items in the storage area and updating an inventory database to reflect the determined presence or absence of the items in the storage area.

Claim 84 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 83, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (d) saving the categorized information in a the inventory database.

Claim 85 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein the categories are mutually exclusive.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 86 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Claim 87 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein one category describes whether an item is present in a storage area.

Claim 88 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein the categories describe different types of items.

Claim 89 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 84, wherein information necessary to categorize each RFID-tagged item may be obtained from a database stored in memory of the RFID reader.

Claim 90 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 89, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 91 (Currently Amended): A method of interrogating RFID tags associated with items of interest, comprising the steps of:

- (a) selecting at least one category of items using a user interface associated with an a portable RFID reader;
- (b) after selecting the category, interrogating RFID tags associated with items using the portable RFID reader, at least one of which is within the category of items;
- (c) using the portable RFID reader, categorizing information related to the at least one item(s) associated with the interrogated RFID tag(s) in at least one of the categories; and
- (d) using the portable RFID reader, ignoring any RFID-tagged-item that may not be categorized in any of the categories.

Claim 92 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 91, wherein the method further includes the step of:

- (e) saving the categorized information in a database.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 93 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 92, wherein at least one category describes items of a certain type.

Claim 94 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 92, wherein the database is stored on a removable data storage device.

Claim 95 (Currently Amended): A method of using information related to items associated with RFID tags, comprising the steps of:

(a) with a portable RFID reader, obtaining a list of information related to the RFID tags, the list organized in the order in which the RFID tags were interrogated by ~~an~~ the portable RFID reader; and

(b) with the portable RFID reader, organizing the information in an order other than the order in which the tags were interrogated by the portable RFID reader.

Claim 96 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 95, wherein only information related to RFID-tagged items that are out of position by at least a predetermined amount is organized in the order.

Claim 97 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 95, wherein the method further includes the step of:

(c) comparing the organized information from step (b) with a predetermined ordered list.

Claim 98 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein the predetermined ordered list is a list of items in an expected order of location in a storage area.

Application Number 09/876,432
Responsive to Office Action mailed August 10, 2006

Claim 99 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein the method further comprises the step of:

(d) creating a list of items that are on the predetermined ordered list but not among the ordered list from step (b).

Claim 100 (Previously Presented): The method of claim 97, wherein the method further comprises the step of:

(d) creating a list of items that are on the ordered list from step (b) but not among the predetermined ordered list.

Claim 101 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 97, wherein both the ordered list of step (b) and the predetermined ordered list are provided to a computer by a the portable RFID reader.

Claim 102 (Currently Amended): The method of claim 97, wherein both the ordered list of step (b) and the predetermined ordered list are stored on a removable data storage device by a the portable RFID reader, and uploaded from the removable data storage device to a computer.